

Rocky Mountain Lab Rescue...

Saving One Wagging Tail at a Time

By William Given

We were recently presented with the opportunity to discuss the rescue, rehabilitation and re-homing of Labrador Retrievers with Carrie Mauk, President of Rocky Mountain Lab Rescue (RMLR). Everyone who has a passion for rescuing animals has a story about how they found the rescue and why they do what they do, and Carrie is no exception. Carrie tells me she had always wanted to foster but unfortunately had a very aggressive dog. He died from bone cancer four years ago at the age of eight. "I chose Labs (to foster) because I had two kids and two cats. I also knew I wanted to continue to foster after finding my own dog, and Labs usually tend to get along well with children and other pets," said Carrie. In the most humble manner, Carrie informed me that her work with RMLR gives her the feeling that she is saving a life (over and over again).

Rocky Mountain Lab Rescue was founded in November of 2007 by Christian and Amy Dickerson. Amy and Christian were originally hoping they would be able to rescue about 50 Labs from kill shelters and find them loving forever homes. That first year, they actually took in 130 dogs and they found adoptive homes for 129 of them. The last dog went to a sanctuary for behavioral reasons.

With the Labrador retriever being the most popular dog, it's no surprise that there are more Labs to rescue than any other breed. In the past few years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of Labs being given up to animal shelters and to rescue groups by their owners. The recession has resulted in more people losing their jobs which has forced them to move in with family members where there is no room for a dog. Many people have also lost their homes to foreclosure and by necessity are moving into apartments that do not allow dogs.

Last year approximately 350 dogs were taken in by RMLR and 335 were placed in forever homes with a new loving family to call their own. That is an astonishing success rate of almost 96 percent. In the first three months of this year, RMLR has rescued 93 dogs and adopted out 68, a success rate of only 73 percent but spring and summer are now upon us and this is the time of year when many families begin considering adopting a family pet.

The Cost of Rescue

As with all rescue groups, the adoption fees do not come close to covering the veterinary expenses and cost of operations. Last year RMLR had \$86,000 in medical expenses. The costs were \$43,000 for general veterinary care, \$25,000 for surgeries, \$16,000 for neutering and spaying, and approximately \$2,000 for heartworm treatments.



Photo by Vasiliy Koval

By comparison, RMLR has already spent more than \$25,000 in the first quarter of this year. This included \$16,000 for surgical procedures, \$7,000 for general veterinary care, \$2,000 for spaying and neutering and \$300 for treating heartworms. The estimated financial need for medical care this year is \$98,500. There has been a significant increase in the number of Labs being relinquished by their owners who can't afford to pay for needed surgeries or other expensive medical care.

Rocky Mountain Labrador Rescue is an organization operated entirely with volunteers. Every penny of contributions pay for veterinary care, medications and other direct expenses necessary to rescue, rehabilitate and find forever homes for hundreds of loving Labs each year. If you wish to make a sponsorship donation you can even earmark your donation for the care of a specific dog or treated condition.

If you cannot make a monetary contribution, you can still help RMLR. The rescue has a wish list of items you could donate to help them in their cause. On this list are things such as large and extra large crates, washable dog beds, regular and prescription dog foods, joint supplements and heartworm preventative. RMLR could also use inexpensive items like collars and leashes.

Need for Foster Families

Not a day goes by that RMLR doesn't receive a number of phone calls begging them to take an owner-relinquished Lab, a shelter dog, or a stray whose owners cannot be found. Often due to lack of resources dogs must be put on waiting lists, and reluctantly, but temporarily turned away simply because RMLR does not have a foster home available. Carrie said, "We have 25

foster homes and they are the most important link in our rescue chain." Without their hard work and assistance, RMLR could not save, rehabilitate and place the number of homeless Labs they do. When I asked Carrie about RMLR's need for more foster homes, she told me, "We could never have enough foster homes and would love to have as many as we could get." A rescue group, even one whose volunteers are as committed as those of RMLR, can only rescue as many dogs as they have foster homes. Carrie says, "A great way to decide if you are ready for a Lab is to take a test run and save a life at the same time by fostering a dog you may be interested in adopting."

Adopting a Lab

The adoption of a RMLR Lab is a simple four step process and can be completed in a week or two.

- Step 1: Fill out an application
- Step 2: Complete a phone interview about the dogs you are interested in
- Step 3: Have a home visit
- Step 4: Bring your new four-legged companion home

The adoption fee for a dog 12 months old or less is \$250, \$225 for a dog between the ages of 1 year and 6 years, and for dogs over the age of 7 years the adoption fee is \$175.

Pros of the Breed

The Lab is gentle, handsome, playful, affectionate, loyal and fun-loving. As a family dog, the Lab makes coming home a special experience and it doesn't matter whether you have been gone for the entire day or just 15 minutes. Labs possess all the qualities anyone could want in a dog. They are eager to please, learn quickly and are easy to train even by a novice owner. Labs bond well with all members of the family and pose a very low risk of biting. The life expectancy for Labs is 12-14 years.

Grooming requirements are minimal but they do shed moderately in the spring and fall. A quick brushing daily will keep the hair outside rather than all over your floors and furniture.

Cons of the Breed

Labrador retrievers are generally pretty healthy dogs but are prone to several ailments. One of the best known is hip dysplasia. It is caused by an abnormal formation in the hip which leads to a loss of cartilage and pain. Like most athletes they have problems with their knees and elbows. Labs are also susceptible to a genetic eye defect called retinal dysplasia which causes blind spots.

Special Dogs

There are several Labs in foster care that are in need of especially loving homes. The first is CC, a three-year-old yellow Lab female. She is a sweet young lady who will quickly steal your heart away. She is in need of surgery on both of her rear legs. Her surgery is pending and if adopted beforehand, RMLR will pay for the surgery. Maybe your family is the forever home she has been looking for to help speed her recovery along.

Cody is another dog deserving a forever home. He is a handsome seven-year-old yellow Lab male. He is fully house trained, knows a few basic commands and wants to learn more. Cody enjoys walking on the leash and riding in the car.

Thank You

Ms. Mauk and all of the volunteers of the RMLR organization would like to express their sincere appreciation to all the animal care professionals who have been so invaluable to their organization. All have provided free or discounted services making the rescue's success possible.

For more information on adopting, fostering, donating or hosting a fundraising event, please call 303-818-8508 or e-mail rockymtnlabrescue@gmail.com or visit www.rockymtnlabrescue.com. They will welcome and appreciate your gift of money or contribution of time to assist in their mission of rescuing, rehabilitating, and re-homing loving Labrador retrievers.



Adoptable Labs - These and other great dogs are looking for forever homes



Miley
3-year-old female



Gus
1-year-old male



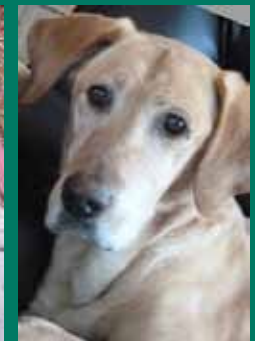
Cosby
7-year-old male



Mink (Lab mix)
2-year-old female



Arie
6-year-old male



Tiger
6-year-old male